

# Steps to Becoming Certified and Licensed as a Nurse Practitioner

(\*\*Please note that different states have different regulations. Be sure to contact the Board of Nursing in your state of practice for detailed information)

1. You **MUST** complete all degree requirements (course work and graduate project) prior to initiating the application process to sit for your certification exam.
2. While you are preparing to graduate, go to Student Services to request that your official transcript be sent directly to the appropriate certifying body listed in the table below, as well as the IBON. Two requests need to be completed.
3. Determine which examination you want to sit for: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), or Pediatric Nursing Certification Board (PNCB).

| <b>ANCC</b>  | <b>AANP</b>  | <b>AACN</b>   | <b>PNCB</b>   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Computer based   | Computer based   | Computer based or paper and pencil                              | Computer based  |
| Available for ACNP, ANP, FNP, GNP, & PMHNP   | Available for ANP, FNP, & GNP                                      | Available for Acute Care only                                   | Available for Acute Care Pediatric only   |
| 175 questions (150 scored, 25 sample)  | 150 questions (135 scored, 15 sample)                              | 175 questions (150 scored, 25 sample)                           | 175 questions (150 scored, 25 unscored)   |
| 3.5 hour time frame  | 3 hour time frame  | 3 hours   | 3 hours   |
| Passing score =>350/500  | Passing score =>500/800  | Criterion based   | Criterion based   |
| Incorporates scope of practice, ethics, reimbursement, clinical content and more                         | Incorporates clinical content only                                 | Incorporates 73% clinical judgement, 27% non-clinical judgement | Incorporates assessment (45 questions), diagnosis (38 questions), management (60 questions), professional practice role (7 questions) |
| If fail: can reapply to take again after 90 days   | If fail: can retake after 15 contact hours of continuing education | If Fail: can retake 4 times in 1 year                           | If fail: can retake once each testing window (~6 per year)  |
| Credentials: _NP-BC with letter in front indicating specialty -FNP-BC, ACNP-BC, ANP-BC, GNP-BC, PMHNP-BC | Credentials: All specialties utilize NP-C                          | Credentials ACNP-C  | Credentials: CPNP-AC  |

Timelines can be found on the respective websites.

AANP: <https://www.aanpcert.org/>

ANCC: <https://www.nursingworld.org/our-certifications/>

AACN: <https://www.aacn.org/certification/get-certified/acnpc-ag>

PNCB: <https://www.pncb.org/cpnp-ac>

4. Shortly after you have applied to take the exam, you will receive a letter from the organization stating that they have received your application and information. If you do not receive this confirmation within 2 weeks, you may want to call to confirm or to see if they are missing information. Once your application has been approved, you will also receive information from a testing center with details about the exam and how to schedule your exam and location.
5. Schedule your exam with the testing center. Most applicants test in Des Moines or Iowa City.
6. Prepare for the exam: Certification entities provide test content outlines, reference lists, and sample suggestions for each certification, free of charge. Additional review materials may be purchased separately. You should also consider enrolling in a nurse practitioner certification review course (e.g., Barkley and Associates, Fitzgerald Health Education Associates, and Advanced Practice Education Associates), some of which are offered electronically and/or in face-to-face sessions. The recommendation for attending a review course is 9-12 months prior to graduation.
7. Take the exam: Make sure that you have the required ID to be admitted to take the exam. You are not allowed to bring anything into the testing center-no pens/pencils, keys, good luck charms-NOTHING! At your desk you will have a variety of ear plugs or headsets and a white board and marker so that you can write items down as needed. You will have a chance to run through how to take the online exam. Then your test will begin. Once you have completed the exam you will take a survey. Following the survey you will be given a Pass/Fail announcement or print out. A full report of your exam will be mailed to you within 2 weeks. This will display your score and pass confirmation. This certification is valid for 5 years.
8. Once you have passed the certification exam you may apply for state licensure through the Iowa Board of Nursing. Instructions and the application for the IBON ARNP application can be found at this link:  
[http://www.state.ia.us/nursing/licensure/advanced\\_reg\\_nurse.html](http://www.state.ia.us/nursing/licensure/advanced_reg_nurse.html)

Additional information for ARNPs through IBON can be found at the following link:

[http://www.state.ia.us/nursing/nursing\\_practice/arnp.html](http://www.state.ia.us/nursing/nursing_practice/arnp.html)

9. You must contact Student Services requesting your official transcript to be sent to the IBON, or whichever state you are applying for licensure.
10. AANP/ANCC will automatically send out notification to the board of nursing if you indicated to do so in your application.
11. Within a few weeks you will receive your NP certificate and your IBON license.
12. Apply for your Iowa Controlled Substance Registration. You need your Iowa license in order to do this. Go to [www.state.ia.us/ibpe](http://www.state.ia.us/ibpe). Then click on "application

forms” and then “controlled substance registration.” When your application is process you will get an email with your CSA number and it will state “pending PMP.”

13. Once you have received the Iowa Controlled Substance (ICS) number, you can apply for your DEA number. Be sure to have completed eight (8) hours of CEs regarding opioids. Go to [www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov](http://www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov).
14. Obtain employment: Once you have a place to practice, often they will assist you in obtaining your NPI number and insurance credentialing. You will also need to obtain liability insurance; again most employers would help to obtain this. Payment for these fees can be negotiated during the interviewing process.
15. When you get your DEA and NPI numbers, you will need to apply for a free account with the Iowa PMP (Prescription Monitoring Program) at <https://iowa.pmpaware.net/login>. Once the account is approved by the Iowa Board of pharmacy, you will get your CSA certificate mailed to you and it will be changed to an active status.
16. Renewal: Renewal of your certification is presently every five (5) years. Please see the website for specific requirements for your certifying body. IBON renewal varies. Please see the website for requirements.